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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 05/16/06

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ARTICLES:

(1) Poll on Koizumi cabinet, political parties, post-Koizumi race  
(Mainichi)

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
May 16, 2006

Questions & Answers

(T = total; P = previous; M = male; F = female)

Q: Do you support the Koizumi cabinet?

	T	P	M	F
Yes	50	(48)	46	53
No	36	(36)	43	50
Not interested	13	(15)	10	16

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the above question) Why?

	T	P	M	F
Because the prime minister is from the Liberal Democratic Party	8	(11)	8	8
Because something can be expected of Prime Minister Koizumi's leadership	24	(28)	22	25
Because new policy measures can be expected	17	(17)	17	18
Because the nature of politics is likely to change	47	(41)	52	43

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Q: (Only for those who answered "no" to the above question) Why?

	T	P	M	F
Because the prime minister is from the Liberal Democratic Party	8	(11)	9	7
Because the prime minister compromises too much with the ruling parties	22	(22)	25	17
Because the nation's economic recovery is slow	49	(46)	44	56
Because the prime minister is reluctant to take action against political scandals	15	(15)	15	16

Q: Which political party do you support?

	T	P	M	F
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	31	(33)	29	33
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	20	(12)	27	14
New Komeito (NK)	6	(3)	4	7
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	2	(3)	2	2
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	2	(3)	2	1
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	0	(0)	0	0
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	0	(0)	0	0
Other parties	1	(1)	0	1
None	35	(43)	34	36

Q: Prime Minister Koizumi will not run in the LDP's presidential election set for this September and will step down. Who do you think is appropriate for the next prime minister?

	T	P	M	F
Taro Aso	3	(3)	3	3



Shinzo Abe	38	(36)	35	42
Taro Kono	2	(--)	2	1
Sadakazu Tanigaki	3	(1)	4	2
Yasuo Fukuda	20	(18)	27	13
Taku Yamasaki	1	(1)	1	1
Not on the list	27	(28)	25	29

Q: What would you like the next prime minister to pursue first?

	T	P	M	F
Fiscal reconstruction	19	(20)	21	18
Economic recovery	29	(27)	27	31
Cope with low birthrates	23	(23)	19	26
Improve Japan's ties with China, South Korea	14	(11)	20	10
Constitutional revision	3	(4)	4	2
Not on the list	8	(9)	8	9

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Q: It has been one month since Ichiro Ozawa became DPJ president. Do you have expectations for the DPJ under him?

	T	M	F
Yes	53	60	47
No	41	37	45

(Note) Figures shown in percentage, rounded off. "0" indicates that the figure was below 0.5%. "No answer" omitted. Parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted April 1-2. In the last survey, Taro Kono was not on the list of post-Koizumi candidates, and Heizo Takenaka was on the list.

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted May 13-14 over the telephone with the aim of calling a total of 1,000 voters across the nation on a computer-aided random digit sampling (RDS) basis. Answers were obtained from 1,061 persons.

(2) Poll on Koizumi cabinet, political parties, post-Koizumi race (Tokyo Shimbun)

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)  
May 16, 2006

#### Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted April 7-8.)

Q: Do you support the Koizumi cabinet?

Yes	49.6	(47.2)
No	37.6	(39.9)
Don't know (D/K) + no answer (N/A)	12.8	(12.9)

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the previous question) What's the primary reason for your approval of the Koizumi cabinet? Pick only one from among those listed below.

The prime minister is trustworthy	9.6	(12.4)
Because it's a coalition cabinet of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito	3.5	(5.4)
The prime minister has leadership ability	19.5	(16.8)
Something can be expected of its economic policies	4.0	(6.6)
Something can be expected of its foreign policies	5.1	(1.8)
Something can be expected of its political reforms	16.5	(20.3)
Something can be expected of its tax reforms	1.4	(2.0)



Something can be expected of its administrative reforms  
 10.6 (6.1)  
 There's no other appropriate person (for prime minister)  
 28.3 (25.7)  
 Other answers (O/A)  
 0.7 (1.5)  
 D/K+N/A  
 0.8 (1.4)

Q: (Only for those who answered "no" to the first question)

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What's the primary reason for your disapproval of the Koizumi cabinet? Pick only one from among those listed below.

The prime minister is untrustworthy  
 12.2 (9.6)  
 Because it's a coalition cabinet of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito  
 5.8 (4.1)  
 The prime minister lacks leadership ability  
 1.6 (0.7)  
 Nothing can be expected of its economic policies  
 22.2 (23.9)  
 Nothing can be expected of its foreign policy  
 15.1 (12.5)  
 Nothing can be expected of its political reforms  
 10.5 (9.2)  
 Nothing can be expected of its tax reforms  
 11.0 (12.9)  
 Nothing can be expected of its administrative reforms  
 6.6 (10.0)  
 Don't like the prime minister's personal character  
 11.1 (11.8)  
 O/A  
 2.0 (3.7)  
 D/K+N/A  
 1.9 (1.6)

Q: Which political party do you support?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	39.0	(43.4)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	24.2	(19.9)
New Komeito (NK)	3.8	(3.0)
Japan Communist Party (JCP)	1.9	(2.6)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	1.9	(1.5)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	0.1	(0.3)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	0.2	(0.1)
Other political parties, groups	---	(---)
None	27.2	(27.3)
D/K+N/A	1.7	(1.9)

Q: Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has declared his intention to step down in September this year. The next prime minister will essentially be elected in this fall's LDP presidential election. Who do you think is appropriate for the next prime minister? Pick only one.

Taro Aso	4.5
Shinzo Abe	40.1
Taro Kono	1.6
Sadakazu Tanigaki	2.7
Yasuo Fukuda	31.4
Others	1.4
D/K+N/A	18.3

Q: Do you think the next prime minister should pay homage at Yasukuni Shrine?

Yes	35.8
No	51.8
D/K+N/A	12.4

Q: Prime Minister Koizumi has pushed for structural reforms, such as introducing market mechanisms and carrying out deregulation.



What do you think the next prime minister should do about structural reforms? Pick only one.

Continue	30.1
Revise	30.6
Overhaul	32.3
D/K+N/A	7.0

Q: When would you like the next House of Representatives election to be held? Pick only one.

By the end of this year, after this fall's LDP presidential election	36.3
By the end of next year	28.6
In 3 years, shortly before the present House of Representatives members' term ends	24.8
O/A	0.3
D/K+N/A	10.0

Q: There will be an election for the House of Councillors in the summer of next year. At this point, which political party or which political party's candidate would you like to vote for? Pick only one.

LDP	37.1
DPJ	28.9
NK	3.8
JCP	2.4
SDP	1.5
PNP	0.1
NPN	---
Other political parties, groups	---
Independent	2.9
Won't go to the polls	0.9
D/K+N/A	22.4

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted by Kyodo News Service over a period of two days, May 13-14, on a random digit-dialing (RDD) basis. The computer-aided RDD methodology, which makes and puts out telephone numbers at random for polling, can survey those who do not have their telephone numbers listed in telephone directories. Among those randomly generated telephone numbers, those actually for household use with one or more eligible voters totaled 1,486. Answers were obtained from 1,025 persons.

(3) Poll on Koizumi cabinet, political parties, LDP race (Yomiuri)

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
May 16, 2006

#### Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote the results of a survey conducted in April.)

Q: Do you support the Koizumi cabinet?

Yes	54.4	(56.0)
No	35.4	(35.5)
Other answers (O/A)	2.7	(2.3)
No answer (N/A)	7.5	(6.2)

Q: Give up to two reasons for your approval of the Koizumi cabinet.

I can appreciate its political stance	31.9
I can appreciate its policy measures	15.6
It's stable	13.8
The prime minister is trustworthy	15.7
It's achieved actual results	40.3



It's a coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito	7.7
It's better than its predecessors	38.4
O/A	1.5
N/A	0.4

Q: Give up to two reasons for your disapproval of the Koizumi cabinet.

I can't appreciate its political stance	38.7
I can't appreciate its policy measures	42.2
It's unstable	12.0
The prime minister is untrustworthy	25.4
It's failed to achieve noticeable results	22.9
It's a coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito	15.2
It's worse than its predecessors	3.9
O/A	3.3
N/A	1.7

Q: Which political party do you support now?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	42.3	(42.8)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto)	15.8	
(14.0)		
New Komeito (NK)	3.4	(2.2)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	2.0	(1.5)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto)	1.2	(1.0)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto)	---	(0.1)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon)	0.2	(0.2)
Other political parties	0.1	(---)
None	34.5	(36.9)
N/A	0.7	(1.2)

Q: Prime Minister Koizumi has clarified his intention to resign as prime minister in September this year when his term as LDP president runs out. Who do you think is appropriate for the next prime minister? If any, pick only one from among the following nine persons.

Taro Aso	4.1
Shinzo Abe	40.0
Koichi Kato	2.8
Yuriko Koike	1.2
Heizo Takenaka	1.6
Sadakazu Tanigaki	1.4
Fukushiro Nukaga	0.4
Yasuo Fukuda	23.2
Taku Yamasaki	0.4
Others + not on the list + N/A	24.8

Q: Do you have expectations for DPJ President Ozawa?

Yes	27.0
Yes to a certain degree	22.5

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No to a certain degree	16.9
No	30.8
N/A	2.8

Q: Do you think the DPJ is competent enough to take office?

Yes	29.4
No	61.4
N/A	9.2

Q: To what extent do you think DPJ President Ozawa will affect the LDP presidential election?

Very much	15.3
Somewhat	43.6
Not very much	25.4
Not at all	9.4
N/A	6.3



Polling methodology  
 Date of survey: May 13-14.  
 Subjects of survey: 3,000 persons chosen from among all eligible voters throughout the country (at 250 locations on a stratified two-stage random sampling basis).  
 Method of implementation: Door-to-door visits for face-to-face interviews.  
 Number of valid respondents: 1,788 persons (59.6% ).  
 Breakdown of respondents: Male-49%, female-51%.

(4) Poll on education law revision

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
 May 16, 2006

Questions & Answers  
 (T = total; P = previous; M = male; F = female)

Q: A government-introduced bill is now before the Diet for amendments to the Basic Education Law. The bill incorporates the wording "respect Japan's traditions and culture" and "love Japan and its land." What do you think about these expressions?

	T	P	M	F
They're fine	40		37	42
Patriotism should be even more expressly stipulated	26		29	24
There's no need to incorporate patriotism	25		30	21

Q: Do you think the law should be amended during the current Diet session?

	T	P	M	F
Yes	17		16	18
No	66		70	62
It should be voted down and scrapped in the current Diet session	7		9	5

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted May 13-14 over the telephone with the aim of calling a total of 1,000 voters across the nation on a computer-aided random digit sampling (RDS) basis. Answers were obtained from 1,061 persons.

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(5) Camp Schwab coastline plan and Okinawa governor: Inamine needs to offer clear explanation to Okinawa public

MAINICHI (Page 4) (Abridged slightly)  
 May 16, 2006

By Teruhisa Mimori of the Mainichi Shimbun Naha Bureau

Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine reached an accord with the Defense Agency to relocate the functions of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station to the coastline of Camp Schwab in Nago in the prefecture and signed a basic agreement with the central government. Despite that, the governor has repeatedly denied he has given his concurrence on the coastal plan, which he had been rejecting since the release of the interim realignment report between Japan and the US last October. But the more he tries to insist that he is not in agreement, the more unclear his true motives become. His denial even makes me think that he had no choice but to accept the plan given a reduction in the security burden and the return of some of the bases in the prefecture. Inamine should stop speaking with a forked tongue and explain his real intention to the Okinawa public.

The biggest problem with the basic agreement is that it is an accord on the coastal plan, no matter how it is read, and that it is totally divorced from Okinawa's May 4 request for a temporary heliport to prevent the new site from becoming a permanent base. Inamine said in a press conference on May 12, "It simply affirmed continued talks while recognizing differences in views between



the central and Okinawa prefectural governments."

If that is true, why there are no passages explaining the differences between the government's coastal plan and Okinawa's temporary heliport plan? Inamine also explained that being unable to accept the coastal plan, the prefectural government has presented the central government with a written request for a temporary heliport. But the central government and Okinawa signed only one agreement.

The agreement reads: "To deal with the matter carefully when eliminating risks of Futenma Air Station." The Defense Agency may argue that the coastal plan is the ultimate means to eliminate risks.

The major difference between the coastal and temporary heliports plans is that the former involves landfills. Both plans involve the use of the land portion of Camp Schwab. The phrase "based on the government's plan" does not automatically rule out a temporary heliport. The authority to issue permission for reclaiming land rests with the governor. Every time Inamine was asked if he would say 'yes' to a government request for landfills, he always said, "That won't occur anytime soon. For now, I'll focus on my immediate goals." The central government may ask for the governor's permission in three or four years. Inamine might not be in office when the government asks for it. If Inamine is absolutely determined to reject the coastal plan to the last, why couldn't he tell people that he will not allow a landfill project if he is in office three or for years from now?

Seventy-five% of US bases in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa, a prefecture making up only 0.6% of Japan's national land area. Opinion polls conducted in April by two local newspapers showed

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that 70% of Okinawans were against the coastal plan. Inamine is in a position to represent their wishes. He is also one of the governors of prefectures hosting US bases -- a position bearing heavy responsibilities.

There are more lawmakers and local heads who are reneging on promises than one can count. Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro is one of them. Shimabukuro had shown boundaries for revision talks by using aerial photos before the city assembly, but he soon reached an agreement with the Defense Agency on a V-shaped runway plan, a large deviation from the boundaries he talked about. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi also described the government's failure to deliver on his pledge to keep the issuance of new bonds below 30 trillion yen as "no big deal."

In discussing the Okinawa base issue, Inamine used language that was hard to understand. Spending the last year in Naha, I have developed a favorable impression of Inamine as governor attaching importance to his previous statements and their consistency. He kept refusing the coastal plan even after Tokyo and Washington produced their final report incorporating major steps to reduce Okinawa's burden, such as relocating 8,000 US Marines to Guam and returning six bases south of Kadena Air Base.

But I must admit that my view of Inamine was wrong. Inamine indicated that he would play up the temporary heliport plan in talks with the central government. But there is no connection between the coastal plan, which would pave the way for permanent base arrangements, and the temporary heliport plan. Inamine's insistence on the heliport plan is certain to collapse.

The return of the six bases and a decline in the number of US Marines would tremendously affect the incomes of local landowners, employment of local base workers, and Okinawa's overall economy. As those issues cannot be settled independently, Okinawa must cooperate with the government. Accepting the coastal plan is one option.

In order to make decisions, Okinawa residents need a thorough explanation. Given no clear explanation, they must have greeted the 35th anniversary of the reversion of Okinawa to Japan



yesterday with deeply mixed emotions.

(6) Reason why pro-American Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe gave the cold shoulder to US Assistant Secretary of State Hill

SHUKAN BUNSHU (Page 54) (Full)  
April 27, 2006

On April 10, the members of the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear issue assembled in Tokyo for a "Tokyo Conference." All eyes were on the possibility of a meeting between the United States and North Korea, but since US Assistant Secretary of State Hill had rejected such a possibility, nothing resulted in the end. However, there was another person whom Hill himself wanted to meet but did not. That person was Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe.

A political reporter for a national daily said: "Assistant Secretary Hill sounded out Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe about a

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meeting. But Abe's aides were reluctant, so a date was never set." Abe is known to be part of the Diet's pro-American group, going back to the days when former US Deputy Secretary of State

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Armitage and Abe's father (when he was foreign minister) were in close contact. Abe's accomplishments also include his standing on the forefront in tackling issues with North Korea. Then, why did Abe refuse to meet Assistant Secretary Hill?

According to the same source, "Assistant Secretary Hill is a big hater of Japan. At the time when Secretary of State Rice visited Indonesia on March 14, he assembled the accompanying press and naming him by name said, 'Mister Abe is too hawkish.' He criticized Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe as if he were one of the causes of discord in the six-party talks. Since Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe knew that fact, he must have made the judgment that

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there was no reason to meet Hill."

In the post-Koizumi political race, Abe's evaluation in America is growing stronger every day. That is why Assistant Secretary Hill wanted to repair relations with him. But he was rejected like a spurned lover. Assistant Secretary Hill has long been known in the US government for his tendency to make irresponsible remarks. A White House source revealed: "At the beginning of this year, Hill, forgetting his position was that of assistant secretary of State, directly told President Bush that the reason

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for the lack of progress in six-party talks was the Yasukuni issue. President Bush admonished him, 'You're in no position to make such a charge.'

A source in the Foreign Ministry revealed: "At one point, Asia-Pacific Affairs Bureau Director General Kenichiro Sasae was working strongly on Assistant Secretary Hill in order to bring about a meeting between the US and North Korea. But the White House sent Victor Cha, the director of North Korean and Japanese affairs in the National Security Council, to accompany Hill as its 'chief spy,' for Assistant Secretary Hill was not allowed to act on his own. As a result, Assistant Secretary Hill, having been stiffed by Abe, met with the prime minister's personal secretary (Kaoru) Iijima, but after the meeting, he reportedly

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let this slip out: 'That was a waste of time.'" The sea is rough indeed when it comes to negotiations with North Korea.

(7) METI to assist Asia in its energy conserving effort; Plan to be mapped out before end of this month; Stabilizing crude oil prices eyed

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)



May 15, 2006

In a bid to cut fast-growing energy consumption in Asia, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has as of May 14 decided to map out an Asia energy conservation program, which is designed to disseminate Japan's top-level energy conserving technology and system to Asian countries. Characterizing the program as part of its future energy policy, METI will incorporate it in its new state energy strategy, which it will compile before the end of May. The aim of providing such assistance is to stabilize rising energy prices, such as oil, as well as to bring developing countries, such as China and India, whose carbon dioxide emissions are on the increase, into a framework that will replace the current Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period ends in 2012.

A major portion of the program will be to assist Asian countries with the implementation of various systems that have been proved successful in Japan, including setting energy conserving targets

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for automobiles and household electric appliances and mandating companies to report their energy-conserving efforts.

Countries eligible for such assistance will be chosen from among such countries as China, India, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam, and experts will be dispatched for chosen countries.

Under the program, companies that have energy conserving technology will help Japanese companies engaging in business operations in Asia using public money. Their assistance activities will also cover the improvement of inefficient power plants. METI will also look into the possibility of assisting the establishment of energy conserving targets for electric equipment in cooperation with environmental protection groups.

According to the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy, the amount of oil Japan consumers in producing a certain set amount of profits is one-ninth of the amount China uses. Thus, its energy-conserving level is far higher than that of other Asian countries.

Demand for energy in the Asian region has sharply increased in recent years, following the expanded economic activities there. This is contributing to the sharp rise in crude oil prices.

(8) JAL lets person on board aircraft who was not on manifest

NHK website  
May 16, 2006

According to Japan Air Lines (JAL), one of its aircraft departed last month on the 16th from Qingdao (China) bound for Narita having allowed on board a passenger, a Japanese male in his thirties, who was not listed on the passenger manifest. The man originally was supposed to depart on ANA flight 40 minutes later bound for Narita, but after he went through boarding procedures at Qingdao Airport, he reportedly switched tickets with a woman he knew who was scheduled to board the JAL flight in question. ANA at the boarding gate noticed that he had a woman's passport and her ticket, and refused to let him board since he was a different person, but JAL did not notice the difference and let him board the plane. The man reportedly (later) gave such explanations as, "There was a person on the JAL flight I was traveling with, so I asked the woman to let me go in her stead." The Ministry of Land and Transport has made it obligatory for airline companies as an anti-terrorist measure to check the passports and boarding passes of all passengers in flights bound for Japan. The Ministry has ordered JAL to take measures to prevent a reoccurrence. JAL gave this explanation: "That day, we could not check the passengers because we were busy handling another flight that had been cancelled. We intend to thoroughly confirm the identities of passengers and make every effort to prevent a reoccurrence."

(9) Post-Koizumi contenders; Researching Taro Aso (part 1); Does



not hide his desire to assume premiership, but remains unable to open vista

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)  
May 16, 2006

Five second to third-term Lower House members on the evening of May 12 gathered at a restaurant in Roppongi, Tokyo, having been

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invited there by Foreign Minister Taro Aso. Over dinner, Aso cited such words as "elderly society with vigor" and "small but strong government." Though he has never openly declared his candidacy for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential election, he does not hide his desire to succeed Prime Minister Koizumi.

#### Discord in faction exposed

The five lawmakers were not members of the former Kono faction, to which Aso belongs. Aso holds a meeting with middle-ranked and junior lawmakers once a week. His efforts indicate that there remain high barriers he must clear in order to assume the reins of government. In order to run in the LDP presidential race, which is to take place in September, a candidate needs to be backed by 20 lawmakers. The former Kono faction has only ten members, excluding Aso and Lower House Speaker Yohei Kono, who has temporarily left the faction in order to serve in that post.

Shunichi Yamaguchi, Seiko Noda and Koki Arai recommended Aso in the 2001 presidential election, in which he competed with Junichiro Koizumi. However, they have left the party due to the political crisis over last year's postal services privatization. At the outset of this year, Yohei Kono said: "We will back Mr. Aso in unison. I do not mind changing the name of our faction into the Aso faction." However, his eldest son Taro Kono all of a sudden declared his candidacy on May 11, revealing a deterioration of factional unity.

A certain middle-ranked lawmaker, who backed Aso five years ago, said, "If Shinzo Abe runs, I want to back a winner this time around." While traveling abroad this month, Aso said, "I am confident that I can collect enough recommendations." However, the atmosphere of Nagata-cho (Diet) is neither friendly nor warm toward him now..

The Aso camp's strategy for his becoming prime minister is to increase his name recognition. To face the presidential election, he must have the public's backing, made possible by his having served in the high-profile position of foreign minister. This is the strategy for taking the reins of government envisaged by his camp. However, it is not necessarily working out smoothly.

He holds rallies once a week, giving speeches at such venues as Akihabara, Tokyo. He has also intentionally increased his TV appearances since April. He has added a blog to his website, which was updated on May 8.

Nevertheless, in a poll conducted by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun on May 12 through 14, Aso's popularity rating stood at 3%, far behind Abe's 33% and Yasuo Fukuda's 21%. There is no sign of his support rate taking an upward turn.

Another strategy of the 65-year old Aso is to be the antithesis of the young Abe, as he said, "Considering that the leader of the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) is (veteran) Ichiro Ozawa, being young alone may not suffice as a post-Koizumi contender." However, since the Mori faction decided to allow more than one candidate, chances are now high that Fukuda will also run in the race. If Aso idly stands by, he will be defeated again as was the case in the 2001 election, in which he garnered only 31 votes.

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The outspoken Aso is said to be the maverick of Nagata-cho. He began to show his political presence after the presidential election 10 years ago. Since then, he has successively served in high-profile posts, such as chairman of the LDP Policy Research Council and Internal Affairs and Communications minister. Now his name is on the list of candidates for the LDP president. He once candidly revealed his mind: "I am not a favorite, but I have come this far by not yielding to flattery."

Prospects for his winning look severe, but he is not pessimistic, saying, "You cannot tell whether you will be elected or not if you do not run." He enjoys reading comics, seeing in them the present situation of hopes always being pinned on the arrival of a national savior. Probably because he has made his bid to run in the race, he told his aide: "If the times still yearn for a leader like Mr. Koizumi, I have a chance."

(10) Number of children under state guardianship rises to 35,792, because of child abuse, divorces, deaths of parents

YOMIURI (Page 34) (Full)  
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By Masaki Takakura

The number of children placed under the care of the state (from under one year old to 18 years old) who cannot live with their parents for such reasons as child abuse, their parents' divorces, or deaths of their parents rose to 35,792 individuals as of the end of March 2005, up 1,091 from the year before, according to a survey by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Children under state guardianship are temporarily taken into protective custody by child consultation centers and later moved to child protection centers, homes for orphaned, neglected or abused children, or foster homes registered in each prefecture. As of the end of March 2005, a total of 2,942 children were placed at 117 child protection centers and a total of 29,828 children at 557 homes for orphaned, neglected or abused children. Children left in the hands of foster parents numbered 3,022 persons.

Despite the declining birthrate, the Japanese society has seen the number of children under state care on the rise. As the reasons, the National Council of Children's Homes at Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, explained: "There are no signs that child abuse cases caused by, for instance, domestic violence and neglect of child rearing, are shrinking. Moreover, with nuclear families now the norm, family households no longer work as a place for rearing children."

"I'll become a member of the Herman family"

Take the case of children unable to live with their parents who come under state care. Most of such children taken into state protection are sent to orphanages and live with similar children there. Less than 10% of such children live with their foster parents. On the other hand, some such children, on their own will, seek the warmth of having a family and choose to be adopted into foreign families, ending up going abroad

A 10-year-old boy, Hiroto, who was raised at the orphanage, "Ai-ji no Ie" in Nakano Ward, Tokyo, was adopted by an American couple,

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the Hermans. Early next month, the boy, together with his new family, will depart for Kansas.

Hiroto encountered the couple - husband, B.J. (TN: phonetic), 33, a trainer at the US Yokota Air Base in Fussa City, Tokyo, and his wife, Jenny (TN: phonetic), 32, a teacher at an elementary school - in December 2002. This school has had personal exchanges with "Ai-ji no Ie" for 40 years. The beginning of their encounter was when Jenny invited Hiroto to visit her house.



Hugged

That night, when Hiroto stayed for the first time with the Hermans, being unable to speak English, he began crying: "I'm scared." The couple spoke to him in English, consoling him, "There's nothing to worry about," and hugged him. Soon Hiroto stopped crying and went to sleep.

For six months since then, the couple invited Hiroto to their house every weekend to stay with them. They asked the children's home to allow them to adopt Hiroto, saying: "Children should grow up, receiving 100% love from parents." "That first night, when they both hugged me. I felt very much relieved," Hiroto said. Experiencing the warmth of having a family, Hiroto decided to let himself be adopted as their son.

10-year-old boy to depart for US next month

"I'll become a member of the Herman family," Hiroto told his biological mother, 31, at a guest room of the orphanage, "Aiji no Ie." His mother told him, "You may never be able to see me again," but he nodded: "Even so, I want to go with them."

Hiroto had lived at the orphanage since he was around three. Most children there would be visited by their parents and brought to their homes every weekend, but Hiroto has never had such an experience and had always been alone. His biological mother, deeply in debt, drifted from town to town and did not keep contact with him. His father has never showed up even once.

In May 2004, Hiroto celebrated his birthday with the Herman family at their house for the first time. An unexpected present from his biological mother arrived. It was her handmade photo album that contained snapshots showing them enjoying themselves at Tokyo Disneyland.

The last page of the album carried a farewell note of sorts that went: "I hope you will become a humane and strong person. Mother will always love you."

In September that year, a baby was born as a son to the couple. Hiroto now has a younger brother named Eiden (TN: phonetic). Late that year, the family court approved the adoption of Hiroto into the Herman family. Hiroto now goes to an elementary school at the base and speaks English fluently. Reportedly, he has no problem about daily life at the Hermans.

Since B.J. has concluded his assignment in Japan, the Hermans will depart with his new family for the United States next month. He is now in the fifth grade in elementary school, and still becomes somewhat nervous. He suddenly revealed this feeling to Jenny: "I may miss my mother after settling down in the US."

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DONOVAN